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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

A Lecture on the Study of History. Delivered at Cambridge, June 11, 1895. By Lord ACTON, LL.D., D.C.L. (London and New York: Macmillan and Co. 1895. Pp. 142.)

IF this little volume is stimulating from one point of view, it is depressing from another. It stimulates with its eloquent presentation of high ideals of the value and uses of history; it depresses by conveying to the reader the conviction, which Rasselas formed from Imlac's definition of a poet, that the necessary qualifications can never be found united in a single individual. Patient and endless delving amid forgotten documents and accumulated archives, and the inflexible resolve never to accept a statement without sifting it to the bottom, are the first indispensable requisites, to which are to be added knowledge of the world and of men, familiarity with policies and statecraft, clear insight, accurate judgment, and literary skill. It is well to hitch one's wagon to a star—if only one can reach the star—and, as it is the duty of a teacher to train his pupils to strive for the highest excellence, no fault is to be found with Lord Acton for the lofty standard which he thus presents to their youthful energy and ambition. Worthy work is performed only in the endeavor to attain the unattainable, and he who puts forth his whole powers must perforce abide by the result, although it will always fall short of his hopes and aspirations.

It is not so easy to agree with the lecturer on another point of the highest importance—a point, in fact, on which turns the whole question of the objects and methods of history. He appears (pp. 44 *seqq.*) to set small store by impartiality. The task of the historian is not simply to discover the truth and set it forth so that its lessons shall teach themselves; in his view the student of history is “the politician with his face turned backwards” (p. 58). Superhuman wisdom might, perhaps, educe from the past permanent rules for the guidance of the present and the future, but, human nature being what it is, the historian, who conceives it his duty to investigate and present his facts with a view to a moral suited to his own time and his own opinions or prejudices, will be tolerably sure to distort the past, while the moral sought for to-day may perhaps be something wholly different to-morrow. We can none of us be sure of absolute impartiality; with the most resolute effort to worship pure truth alone, there will always be a residue of prepossession or prejudice, and the wisest advice that can be given to the student is to cultivate sedulously the judicial habit and to beware, above all things, of becoming an advocate. In any

other frame of mind the investigator is apt to become the victim of expectant attention.

There are other matters on which, if space permitted, issue might fairly be taken with Lord Acton; for the lecture touches, incisively if briefly, on almost every disputable question connected with its subject. All are treated acutely, with the immense and varied erudition for which the author is distinguished, and the book will be profitable reading for every one who is interested in the study or teaching of history.

HENRY CHARLES LEA.

Constantinople. By EDWIN A. GROSVENOR, Professor of European History at Amherst College. With an Introduction by General Lew Wallace. (Boston: Roberts Brothers. 1895. Two vols., pp. xxii, xiii, 811.)

CITIES are open to detailed description either in their organic growth and government, in their relation to the general current of history or in their monuments. Professor Grosvenor has adopted the last course. He has written an archæological tour of Constantinople and its environs. He comes to his task with unusual personal qualifications; for twelve years a professor in Robert College, a member of the Hellenic Philologic Syllogos of Constantinople, of the Society of Mediæval Researches in the same city, and of the Athenian Syllogos Parnassos, he has shared the labors of local archæologists, and his text breathes their enthusiasm, and sometimes, one must add, their inevitable lack of perspective. The entire work is written in the key of constant and sometimes overstrained personal interest. This has its advantages in accumulating detail, and lending life and local color. It has its disadvantages in a style which might without loss be soberer and less Byzantine.

On its archæological and local side, the volume stands alone. Many books of travel have dealt with Constantinople. No technical description of the city exists in English. Its last minute account, Ball's translation of Petrus Gyllius, 1729, is approaching the end of its second century, and the descriptions published in connection with editions of Byzantine historians deal with this aspect. In these two volumes, the reader of Gibbon has at length, in the same tongue which the great historian selected for his monumental work, a picturesque and copious account of the great city about which his history centres, and which alone among earth's cities has been for a millennium and a half without interruption the seat of empire and of rule.

Beginning with a sketch of the site, somewhat deficient in its treatment of physiographic conditions, Mr. Grosvenor narrates the history of the city in successive chapters, and passes to a minute account of the region about Constantinople in the light of the historic incident which has made each spot memorable. This occupies the first volume, part of which, with all the second, is devoted to the monuments of the city. Sancta Sophia has